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**STATEMENT BY EASTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
FOR THE
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD**

**PUBLIC MEETING
TO DISCUSS THE LEGAL CLASSIFICATION OF GROUNDWATER**

AUGUST 23, 2001

Eastern Municipal Water District appreciates this opportunity to present comments to Professor Joseph Sax and the State Water Resources Control Board ("State Board") regarding the legal classification of ground water.

Eastern's service area is approximately 550 square miles and includes rapidly growing areas such as Moreno Valley, the Perris Valley, Menifee and parts of Murrieta and Temecula, in addition to older, more established areas such as San Jacinto and Hemet which are also experiencing significant growth. The population of Eastern's service area is rapidly approaching 500,000.

Eastern is a member agency of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California ("MWD") and receives between 70% and 75% of its domestic water supplies from that source. Concerns about the reliability of MWD's northern California and Colorado River water supplies have caused the District to try to reduce its reliance on MWD through the development of the local groundwater resources available. Eastern is currently working with other local agencies, cities and private pumpers in developing a groundwater management plan for the groundwater basins in the San Jacinto-Hemet area which are replenished by the San Jacinto River.

The groundwater basins in the San Jacinto-Hemet area are a major source of groundwater for Eastern which is produced through a large number of wells, many of which are physically close to the San Jacinto River and have been in production for decades, some of them close to 100 years.

For these reasons, we are very concerned about any modification of State Board jurisdiction that would subject the District's existing wells (and replacements thereof) to the State Board's permitting process.

We have reviewed and hereby endorse ACWA's recommendations regarding groundwater classification. In addition, however, we respectfully request that serious consideration be given to providing an exemption for existing wells and their replacements where newly adopted guidelines would indicate that such wells would be producing water otherwise subject to State Board jurisdiction and procedures. We submit that said circumstances will be necessary to avoid a catastrophic disruption of domestic water production currently in place pursuant to California's long established system of water rights.

Thank you for your consideration.

Original signed by Rodger D. Siems
Eastern Municipal Water District
Board of Directors